University of Canterbury

‘Thy Grace on Ever Flowing Tide’

Everyday Life on the Voyage Out in the Shipboard Accounts of Migrant Women to Canterbury, c. 1850-1885.

‘This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA Honours in History at the University of Canterbury. This dissertation is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of other historians used in the dissertation is credited to the author in the footnote references. The dissertation is approximately 9,206 words in length.’

Category One

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the experiences of migrant women on the voyage out to Canterbury between 1850 and 1885. The experiences of these women have not been explored in great depth. It is only recently that scholars have begun to consider their migration experiences independent to those of men. Moreover, the role of religion in migrant woman's lives has been largely ignored by historians who have mostly viewed New Zealand as a secular colony. This study focuses on migrants arriving in Canterbury and uses a number of shipboard accounts to address these silences in the historiography and to make audible the voices of the women themselves. Particular attention is paid to their everyday lives at sea, their daily and weekly routine, as well as issues relating to food, leisure and the impact of class. As this dissertation shows, religion was an important aspect of daily life, providing women with an outlet for their fears and comfort in times of distress. Everyday life on board migrant ships was challenging and uncomfortable, yet these women demonstrated great resilience adapting to the challenges of rough weather, intense heat, and limited space for the three to five months it took for them to make the journey to Canterbury.

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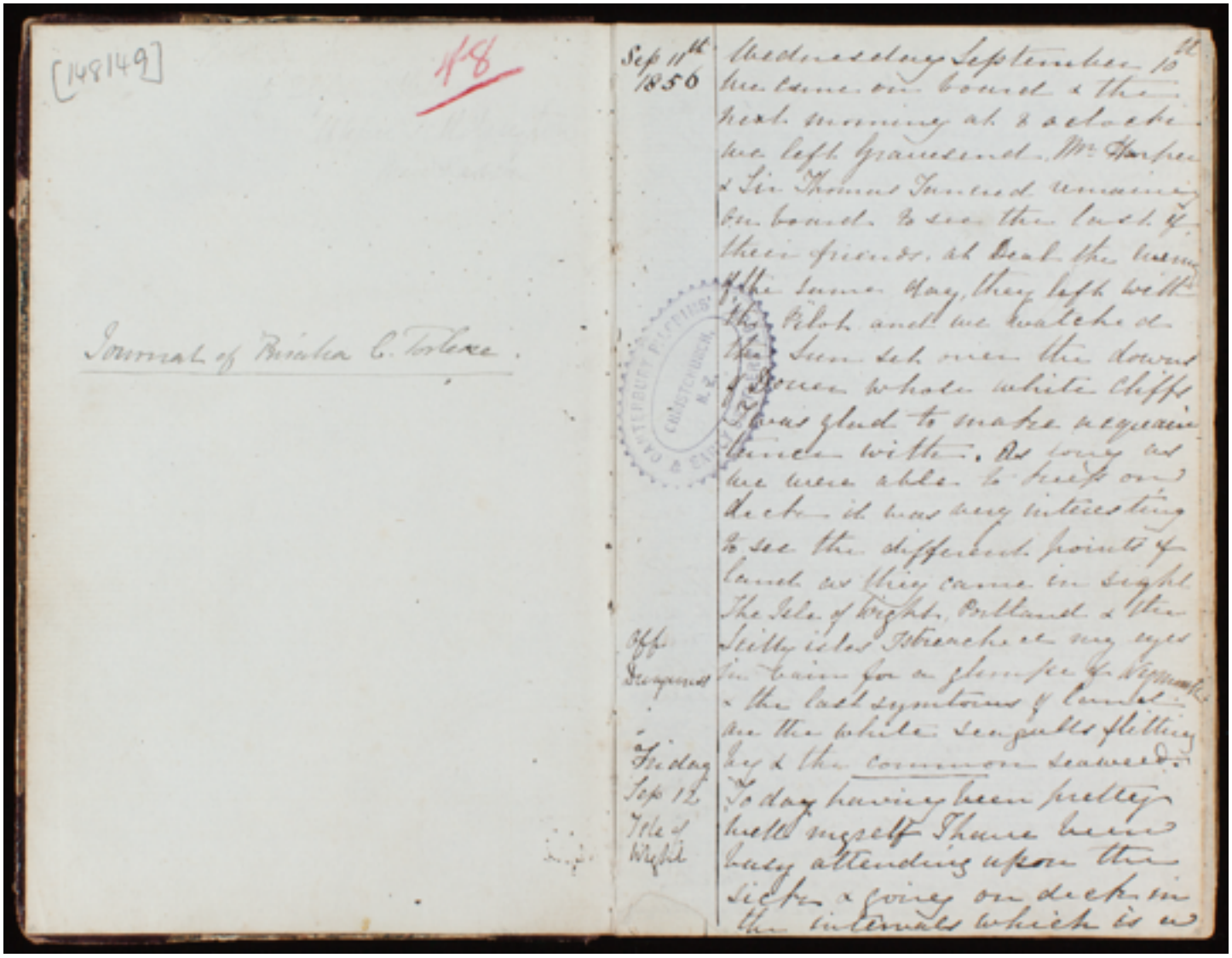
Abbreviations

ANZ	Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga Christchurch Regional Office
ANZC	Australia and New Zealand Archive Collection (Christchurch Public Libraries)
CP & ES	Canterbury Pilgrims and Early Settlers Collection (Canterbury Museum)
S	Steerage (Including both Married and Single Women)

List of Illustrations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Journal of Priscilla C. Torlesse.

Sep 11th 1856 Wednesday September 10th We became on board & the next morning at 8 o'clock we left Gravesend. Mr Harper & Sir Thomas Tancred remaining on board to see the last of their friends. At Deal the wind & the tide were fair, they left with the Pilot and we watched as the Sun set over the downs & Dover white cliffs. I was glad to make acquaintance with it. As long as we were able to keep on deck it was very interesting to see the different points of land as they came in sight. The Isle of Wight, Portland & the Scilly isles. I strained my eyes in vain for a glimpse of Normandy. The last symptoms of land were the white seagulls flitting by & the common seaweed.

Off Dungeness

Friday Sep 12 Isle of Wight

To day having been pretty well myself I have been busy attending upon the sick & going on deck in the intervals which is a

Introduction

On October 28, 1876, Jemima Roy awoke at half-part six in the single women's quarters to start another busy morning aboard the *Cardigan Castle*. After a better night's rest than at the start of the voyage, when plagued by seasickness, she bathed in salt water and then prepared herself for breakfast. The twenty-eight-year-old Norfolk-born housemaid stayed behind to help clean up, before attending morning service. Jemima then spent much of the day writing letters, taking advantage of the fine weather to work out on deck, and singing hymns with her fellow steerage passengers. At eight o'clock all the steerage girls were called down for prayers by the *Castle Cardigan's* matron before preparing themselves for bed and a repetition of the same shipboard routine the following day.[1]

Jemima was one of the many thousands of women who sailed for Canterbury during the great migrations from Britain and Ireland between the 1850s and early 1880s. At the time there was an insatiable demand for women, particularly single women, to combat the chronic shortage of domestic servants and to balance the distribution of sexes in the colony. A common thread in the immigration schemes run by the Canterbury Association, the Canterbury Provincial Government, and, later the central government, was the need for the recruitment of single women.[2] However, immigration agents reported that some were reluctant to leave the protection of their families and colonial authorities worried that the types of women prepared to travel alone were not 'desirable' migrants.[3] Successive provincial administrations showed a preference for girls sailing with their families, but this generally failed to bring in sufficient numbers to meet local demands for domestic labour.[4] Along with their reluctance to travel alone, many single women could not afford to pay for their passage. To attract larger inflows, the Canterbury Provincial Government introduced free passages in 1867 for single women between the ages of fifteen and thirty, and any family member travelling with them was granted a subsidy equal to half their passage.[5] The market for suitable immigrants in Great Britain and Ireland was highly competitive and

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[1] Jemima Roy, *Cardigan Castle 1876.* 23/66. S, Saturday 28th October 1876.

[2] R. H. Silcock, "Immigration into Canterbury Under the Provincial Government" (MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1963), 83.

[3] Ibid., 107.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Pauline O'Reagan, "The Control of Immigration into Canterbury During the Period 1853-1870" (MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1953), 57.

recruiters often found it difficult to make headway, especially given the length of the voyage which was considerably longer and far more taxing than crossing the Atlantic.[6] Most of the single women recruited by Canterbury were drawn from England, which provided about half (45.7 percent) of the assisted female migrants to Canterbury between 1853 and 1870; small numbers were drawn from Scotland (13.8 percent): and nearly two-fifths (39.3 percent) were drawn from Ireland (see Table 1). Despite initial fears that the latter would not make suitable immigrants, it became necessary in the end for immigration agents to recruit women wherever possible, including rural districts in Munster and Connacht.

Regardless of their origins, however, these women had to endure the monotonous daily routine of shipboard life en route to the province. Although there were important differences of class and marital status, they shared in common the challenges presented by everyday life on the voyage, including seasickness, the heat of the tropics, and the horrendous storms of the 'Roaring Forties'. Most also took part in religious services which were a significant part of the weekly routine for those on board the migrant ships. This dissertation explores the everyday experiences of women like Jemima Roy on the voyage out to Canterbury. In the chapters that follow, I seek to establish the ways in which they adapted to the challenges of everyday life, with a particular focus on practices such as religion, food and leisure.

Historiography

There is a strong literature on women and migration in New Zealand, and scholarly and public interest in women's history continues to expand. Work on nineteenth-century migrations has also grown markedly since the turn of the century. Scholars such as David Hastings, Charlotte Macdonald, Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn have made significant contributions to this historiography. Within Canterbury, R.H. Silcock, R. L. N. Greenaway, Pauline M. O'Regan, K. A. Pickens, Lyndon Fraser and Angela McCarthy have all added to our understanding of nineteenth-century Canterbury migrations.[7] Yet there are still

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[6] Jock Phillips and T. J. Hearn, *Settlers: New Zealand Immigrants from England, Ireland and Scotland 1800-1945* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), 22.

[7] See: Silcock, "Immigration into Canterbury Under the Provincial Government"; R. L. N. Greenaway, "Henry Selfe Selfe and the Origins and Early Development of Canterbury" (MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1972); O'Reagan, "The Control of Immigration into Canterbury During the Period 1853-1870"; K. A. Pickens, "The Origins of the Population of Nineteenth Century Canterbury," *New Zealand Geographer* 33(1977): 69-75; Lyndon Fraser and Angela McCarthy, eds., *Far From Home: The English in New Zealand* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2012).

significant gaps within this literature. Macdonald's work, in particular, has provided great insight into the experiences of single women and Hastings has provided a broad outline of the voyage, but much work remains to be done. The everyday experiences of women on voyages to the province between 1850 and 1885 have been given little attention by scholars. Most work has tended to focus on the wider migration patterns, the reasons for migration, and the experiences of newcomers after their arrival in the colony. We know relatively little about the ways in which these women adapted to the challenges of everyday life on the voyage, including how they passed the time on the journey, how they coped with the challenges posed by life on board migrant ships and the how they adapted practices such as religion to suit their new, albeit temporary, environment.

The work of Charlotte Macdonald and David Hastings has made a significant contribution to the development of this historiography, providing valuable insight into understanding the voyage of migrants to New Zealand in the nineteenth century. The research of David Hastings, in particular, provides a useful overview of different aspects of the voyage to New Zealand, including the structure of each day and issues such as birth, death, crime and punishment. While his work deals with the voyage itself, Macdonald focuses her study on single female migrants to New Zealand. She looks more broadly at the lives of migrant women beginning with their journey, while also exploring their life in New Zealand through issues such as work opportunities, as well as marriage and family life. These texts, along with other secondary sources such as *Settlers* by Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn, and theses by R. H. Silcock and Pauline M. O'Regan, provide useful historical context to the voyage. Phillips and Hearn give an in-depth analysis of the number of people who immigrated to New Zealand including aspects such as age, occupation, and nationality. The works of Silcock and O'Regan, on the other hand, explore the issues of immigration to Canterbury under the Provincial government. These three works help to provide useful context to the voyage and to place this research within the broader historiography of nineteenth-century New Zealand and Canterbury migration.

Religion, which constitutes a key theme in this dissertation, is often invisible in the historiography with very little attention given by scholars to the role it played in the lives of migrants to New Zealand.[8] The study of migration history and the historiography of religion should be interconnected as Christianity plays a significant role in the everyday

[8] John Stenhouse, and G. A. Wood, eds. *Christianity, Modernity and Culture: New Perspectives on New Zealand History, Modernity and Culture* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2005), 24.

experiences of many migrants. In a series of publications, John Stenhouse has highlighted the role religion played in the establishment of New Zealand society.[9] This study builds on Stenhouse's work by demonstrating the importance of religion to migrant experiences. Works by scholars such as Hugh McLeod, Frances Knight, and Gail Malmgreen have also been used, providing background context to the importance of religion in peoples lives in nineteenth-century England.[10]

Sources and Methods

This study is based on an analysis of twenty-four surviving shipboard accounts from women who migrated to Canterbury between 1850 and 1885. These primary source materials, housed at the Canterbury Museum and Christchurch Public Libraries, provide the foundation for this research project. A similar methodology has been adopted by scholars like Charlotte Macdonald and David Hastings, who use shipboard accounts to understand the experiences of individuals on the voyage out to New Zealand. Macdonald's work on single women focuses on discovering who these women were and the nature of their individual experiences, which then allowed her to make broader generalisations about their everyday lives on the voyage to Canterbury. However, Macdonald is limited by the fact that she only draws on a small number of journals. My study differs as it draws on the extant Canterbury diaries of migrant women to the region and uses record linkages to create a collective biography, or what Lawrence Stone has referred to as prosopography.[11] Women's voices have often been 'hidden from history'. By using their accounts, this research paper will give voices to those who migrated to Canterbury shedding light on their experiences and adding to the growing literature of New Zealand women's history.

As with most primary sources, there are limitations with shipboard accounts. There is a disparity in the number of writings that have survived from women of different classes, denominations and nationalities. These sources are not representative of all women as those of a particular class or religious background are more likely to be represented than

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[9] Stenhouse and Wood, *Christianity, Modernity and Culture*; John Stenhouse, "Religion and Society," in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand,* ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009); John Stenhouse and Jane Thomson, ed., *Building God's Own Country: Historical Essays on Religions in New Zealand* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2004).

[10] See: Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1996); Frances Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Gail Malmgreen, ed., *Religion in the Lives of English Women 1760-1930* (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986).

[11] Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography," *Daedalus* 100 (1971): 46.

others. For example, there are fewer surviving accounts from Irish women than from their English-and Scottish-born counterparts, despite the fact that they constituted such a large slice of the inflows to Canterbury. As we might expect, fewer accounts survive from women in steerage than those in cabin class, as many did not have the means or the time to write a journal. Most of the extant diaries held in the two archival repositories are from English-born women; we have only one Scottish writer and three from Ireland. None of the Irish women are Catholic, which leaves this sample of shipboard accounts biased towards Protestant views and experiences.[12] There is, however, a relatively even split between steerage and cabin class passengers, with a mixture of married and single women across both classes (see Appendix 2). Inevitably, then, we have a clear bias toward the upper class, the literate, Anglicans, and the English-born. This means that caution needs to be taken when making broad generalisations about *all* migrant women based on the experiences of those writers whose accounts are currently available in the collections. Despite these weaknesses, the accounts provide a valuable window into the past. They contain unwitting testimony, yield suggestive ethnographic descriptions, and constitute a form of life-writing that can be read against the grain to illuminate the inner worlds of migrant women's lives.

Structure of Dissertation

This study will begin by examining the voyage itself and the conditions migrant women faced when embarking on this long and strenuous journey. In Chapter Two, I explore the issue of religion and its role in the everyday lives of women. It will be argued that religion was a significant aspect of daily life for many women and helped to provide them with an element of structure and personal comfort. Chapter Three gives particular attention to the issues of everyday life, the structure of the daily and weekly routine and the impact of class on elements such as leisure and food. My central focuses is on the ways in which these women adapted to the everyday challenges of shipboard life and how they experienced life at sea. This study goes further than previous scholarship by drawing on the extant list of shipboard diaries from migrant women to Canterbury. I also argue for the importance faith to everyday life at sea which has previously been ignored in the historiography.

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[12] Relative Percentage of Catholic and Protestant migrants flows in Canterbury between 1850 and 1885 equal to 55/45. See: Lyndon Fraser and Sarah Dwyer, "When Rolling Seas Shall No More Divide Us: Transnationalism and the Local Geographies of Ulster Protestant Settlement in Nineteenth-Century Canterbury" *New Zealand Journal of History,* 43(2009): 184-185.

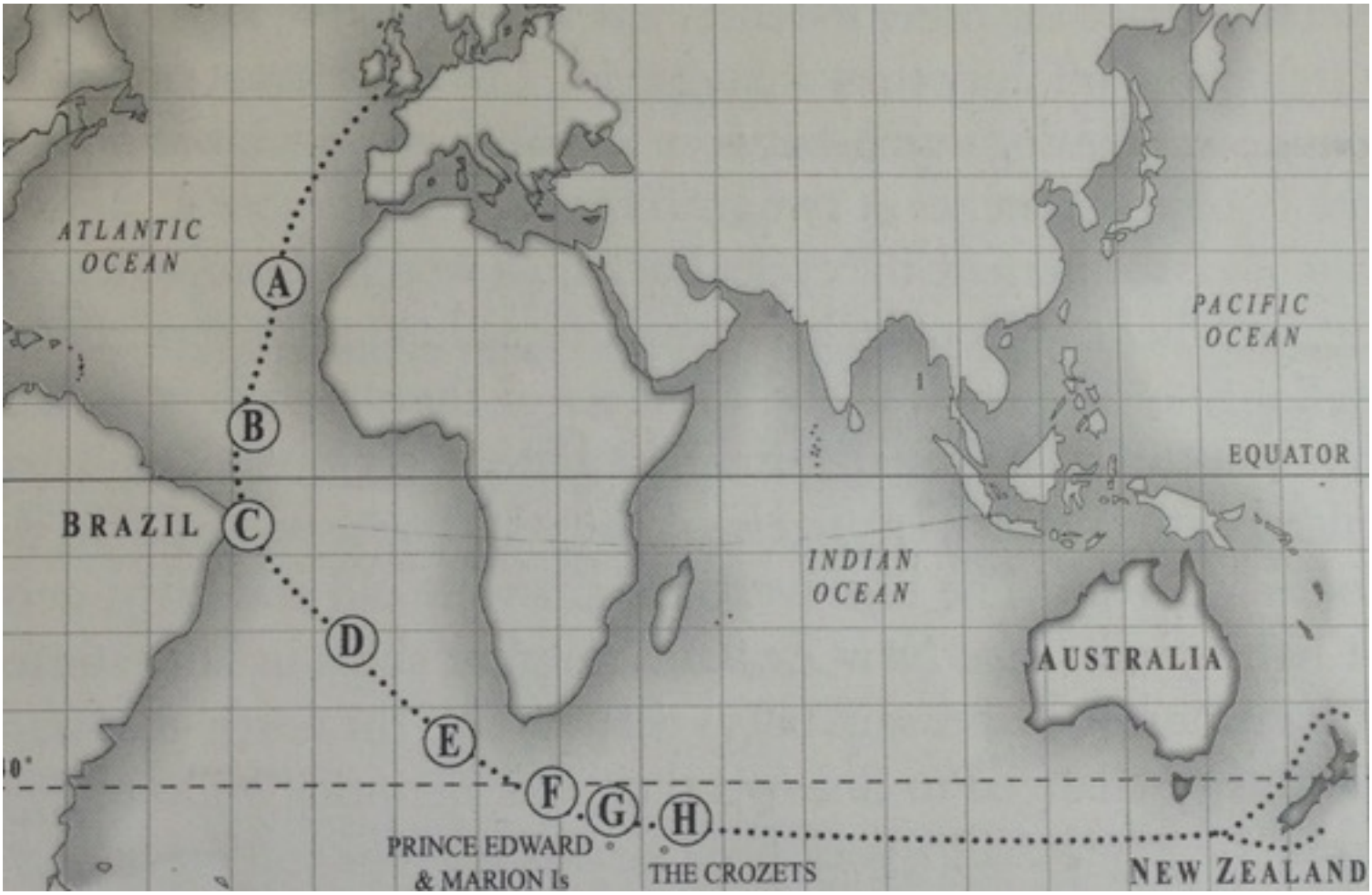

Figure 2: Map of Voyage from Britain to Canterbury

Source: David Hastings, *Over the Mountains of the Sea: Life on the Migrant Ship 1870-1885* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2006), 45.

Chapter One

The Parting Hour

On 8 December 1882, Ann Sutherland, a twenty-seven-year-old domestic servant, began her long journey to the province of Canterbury in New Zealand. Having left her family home in County Down, she departed from Belfast on the eight o'clock boat for Fleetwood, sailing through what she describes as a 'beautiful night'.[13] The vessel made port at 6:30am and Ann caught a waiting train, with hardly any time to attend to her belongings or to have breakfast. From there, Ann changed line eight times on route to London. On a Sunday, two days after leaving Ireland, she finally arrived at the Immigration Depot at Plymouth where she joined many other migrants awaiting final preparations for the departure of the *Crusader*. In the days before embarkation, Ann spent time exploring London and picking up last minute supplies for her long voyage to Canterbury. Finally, on 15 December, she boarded the *Crusader* along with the remaining one hundred and forty single women.[14] Having passed the doctor's examination and settled herself into the steerage quarters, Ann was set for a three month voyage to her new home.

Most women sailing to the province during the great migrations of the nineteenth century would have had similar experiences to those of Ann Sutherland. For these migrants, the journey began long before they even set foot on the ship. After finding their own way to a central meeting point they would have typically travelled by train to the port from which they would depart. Until 1870, when barracks were set up at Plymouth, prospective migrants needed to find their own accommodation prior to embarkation.[15] The wait was sometimes a long one and many diarists record feelings of anticipation and impatience at the time it took to sail.[16] Once aboard ship the scenes they met with were often chaotic and full of confusion as carpenters were still at work preparing the ship for the voyage and the arrival of bumboat men, hucksters, and outfitters turned the decks into makeshift markets. Missionaries also pushed their way through the confusion to distribute Bibles,

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[13] Ann Sutherland, *Crusader 1882*. ARC 1991.12 31/91Folder 120. S.

[14] ANZ Passenger List, "Crusader" IM-CH 4/181.

[15] Silcock, "Immigration into Canterbury Under the Provincial Government," 138.

[16] Rebecca Dawber, *Ceres 1870*. 215/74 Folder 55, 25 to 28 February 1870.

hymn books, and children's scrapbooks as well as providing comfort to the immigrants.[17] Gloucestershire housemaid Eliza Nicholls, for example, writes of a gentleman from the Bible Society boarding the *Pleiades* in 1872 to pray with the immigrants before their departure. She describes him as being 'very nice in his remarks, I only wish he were going with us'.[18] All immigrants also had to undergo a final examination by a doctor appointed by the British Board of Trade. Infectious diseases such as measles, whooping cough, small pox and scarlet fever were often fatal and with no cure the only way to prevent an outbreak on board was through prevention.[19] For many immigrants, especially mothers, the examination could generate feelings of anxiety. If they or their children were found to have symptoms they faced expulsion from the ship delaying their new life in the colony.

Most ships to Canterbury left from Gravesend with some, such as the *Crusader*, departing from other ports including Plymouth. The long and strenuous voyage from England to Canterbury went via the semi-circle route, so called because it was half of the Great Circle Route (see Figure 2). The route took immigrants across the Atlantic ocean off the coast of South America, circling around the Cape of Good Hope before making their way across the Southern Ocean to New Zealand.[20] The voyage consisted of three main phases: the first, as the ship made its way to open sea and through the Bay of Biscay was marked by seasickness and the establishment of everyday routines aboard the ship; after this first twenty-five to thirty days, migrant ships sailed south through the heat of the tropics; and, finally, they began the long run east in the rough seas of the the 'Roaring Forties'.

Many women diarists reported feeling seasick on the open sea and some wished their journey was over before it had even begun. Rebecca Dawber, who was also tending to a number of sick children aboard the *Ceres*, recalled being so ill that she felt she would 'be worn out long before I get to New Zealand'.[21] When they reached the Bay of Biscay the seasickness often became worse and the few who did not succumb to illness were tasked

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[17] David Hastings, "Women at Sea, 1870-1885," in *Shifting Centres: Women and Migration in New Zealand History,* ed., Lyndon Fraser and Katie Pickles (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002), 30.

[18] Eliza Nicholls, Ship Board Diary on the Pleiades. ANZC Archives Call #198, 12 September 1872.

[19] David Hastings, *Over the Mountains of the Sea: Life on the Migrant Ship 1870-1885* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2006), 27.

[20] Ibid., 44-45.

[21] Dawber, *Ceres 1870,* 2 March 1870.

with the job of ministering to the sick.[22] Cabin passenger Priscilla Torlesse remarks in her shipboard diary that while she was 'pretty well' herself she had 'been busy attending upon the sick' on the *Egmont* in 1856.[23] Despite the prevalence of seasickness, the routines of everyday life slowly came to be established in the first few days at sea. During this time many women passengers were preoccupied with writing letters back home describing their first impressions of life at sea for the pilot to deliver after he left the ship.[24] The ritual of correspondence provided a sense of comfort for women as it maintained links with family and friends back in England. Throughout the voyage letter writing remained an important part of everyday life for a number of immigrants, which created great excitement when passing a homebound ship due to the prospect of sending word home.

The slow run south through the tropics was a long and uncomfortable part of the journey for many women diarists. It was particularly tough for single women in steerage, as Charlotte Macdonald has shown, as they were often forced below deck with just the open hatchway to provide air, if they were lucky.[25] Single men, in particular, had more freedom and were able to sleep on deck, and shed more clothes, as well as being allowed to shower on deck and to go swimming when ships were becalmed. Women, however, had to be content with a sponge bath below deck. Even in the lightest muslin dresses they often felt as though they would die of the heat.[26] For cabin class passenger Emma Barker, who was three months pregnant, this part of the voyage was particularly taxing. '[O]wing to the intense heat of the tropics and the sight of nothing but calm sea', she complained, 'I have felt no energy to write a line'.[27] Like women of all classes, she shared the struggle to stay cool: 'we have left all flannels and in fact everything in the way of clothing possible'.[28]

The Roaring Forties marked the final phase of the voyage and brought an end to the intense heat of the tropics, bringing colder weather and strong winds. For some women

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[22] Hastings, *Over the Mountains of the Sea*, 40.

[23] Priscilla Torlesse, *Egmont*. CP & ES 48, 11 September 1856.

[24] Ibid., 41.

[25] Charlotte Macdonald, *A Women of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth-centruy New Zealand* (New Zealand: Allen & Unwin, 1990), 88.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Emma Barker, *Charlotte Jane 1850*. CP & ES 126, 28 September, 1850.

[28] Ibid.

the change in temperature was a welcome relief, but for others it could be just as demanding. Emma Barker found this part of her journey almost unbearable: ‘This is the most uncomfortable part of the voyage; so much rougher and the want of a fire is very trying’.[29] Storms were frequently encountered on the southern oceans and made everyday life more challenging. The constant rocking of ships made it difficult to keep anything on the table at meal times. Even walking about became hazardous. Rogue waves saturated bedding and the canvas walls that divided cabins were at risk of being torn down. This caused great anxiety amongst those women who valued what little privacy they had.[30] Yet some diarists recorded humorous incidents. Writing aboard the *Royal Stuart* in 1861, Matilda Williams described how the rolling of the ship during a storm provided passengers with a good laugh: ‘The day the storm came on we were sitting at work downstairs (the weather is very cold) some on boxes in the middle of the cabin when the vessel gave a roll and they rode from side to side boxes and all, we could not help laughing through we were frightened, the things came tumbling down from all directions’.[31]

The fears that women often expressed as they sailed across the southern latitudes turned into excitement as their ships approached the New Zealand coast. After anywhere between seventy and hundred and thirty days at sea the migrants’ long journey from England came to a close.[32] The end of the voyage was a busy time for both passengers and crew with packing and extra cleaning above and below deck to prepare the ship for arrival. On the 14 March 1865 Sarah Cook records that the sailors on the *Rachel* ‘have begun to prepare for landing, are busy sweeping and cleaning the rigging, and going to paint for everything must be spun when we get to harbour’. She also writes later that one hundred and seventy miles out from their journey’s end the passengers had completed all the cleaning on board and were now anxiously awaiting their arrival.[33] Along with cleaning, collections for the captain, doctor, matron and other members of the crew who had gained the respect of the passengers were also undertaken in a show of gratitude for their

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[29] Ibid., 12 November, 1850.

[30] Frances Porter,Charlotte Macdonald and Tui MacDonald, ed., *‘My Hand will Write What my Heart Dictates’: The Unsettled Lives of Women in Nineteenth Century New Zealand as Revealed to Sisters, Family and Friends* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996), 56.

[31] Matilda Susan Williams, *Royal Stuart 1861*. ARC 1991.69, 13 September 1861.

[32] Macdonald, *A Women of Good Character*, 99.

[33] Sarah Ann Cook, *Rachel 1864*. ARC 1993.64 Folder 108, 21 March 1865.

services during the voyage.[34] When the pilot, doctor, and shipping agents finally boarded the ship at Lyttelton they brought about feelings of excitement and relief amongst the immigrants as it marked an end to their life at sea. Many diarists such as Sarah made note of their arrival and express their disappointment when this was delayed: ‘It feels rather hard that we are so near land yet cannot reach it’.[35]

Many women described their first impressions of their new homeland to family back in England. Sarah Cook, for example, described Lyttelton very favourably: ‘The town lurks at the foot of the mountains. The hills as they are called are tremendously high. Never saw the like before. What a beautiful world we live in’.[36] Arrival also meant a nervous wait to see if the ship passed inspection, or if it was to be sent into quarantine. This could mean a lengthy stay on an isolated island, such as Ripa Island, before being allowed to continue on with their new lives in the colony. Jemima Roy, for example, was among the single women and married passengers quarantined for approximately fifteen days after the arrival of the *Cardigan Castle* in 1877. The ship was found to have sickness on board with one child dying just as the ship arrived at port. The single women and married people were quarantined on the same island with the single men being quarantined separately. She records having greater freedoms on the island than on the ship, as the single girls ‘are allowed to do almost as we like’, along with better food and bathing facilities, however, she was still relieved when her time on the island came to an end.[37] This was not always an end to their challenges. Earlier migrants faced a strenuous journey on foot to Christchurch over the Port Hills carrying their belongings with them. Once the rail tunnel between Lyttelton and Christchurch was completed in 1867 transportation for later settlers into the new city became a much easier task.[38] Once in Christchurch, or its rural hinterland, these women were able to begin their new lives. Most of the single women found employment as domestic servants, an occupation for which there was an incessant demand in the province. Their married counterparts, meanwhile, set about establishing homes with their husbands in which to raise their children.

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[34] Macdonald, *A Women of Good Character*, 100.

[35] Cook, *Rachel 1864*, 24 March 1865.

[36] Ibid., 26 March 1865.

[37] Roy, *Cardigan Castle 1876,* 6 to 22 January 1877.

[38] Silcock, “Immigration into Canterbury Under the Provincial Government,” 161.

These women embarked on the long and arduous journey to settle in Canterbury half a world away from family and friends. Their reasons for immigration varied according to class, nationality, and marriage status. For the many married women who immigrated with their husbands they had little choice but to join them on their adventure to the new colony. Such was the case for Rebecca Dawber who rather reluctantly followed her husband Robert out on his new venture to Banks Peninsula. Many single women however, braved the strenuous three to five month journey for the promise of high wages and guaranteed employment. The labour shortage meant that ten shillings a week was not an uncommon wage for servants to expect.[39] Whatever their reasons for embarking on the voyage, women experienced the same discomforts of seasickness, stifling heat, violent storms, and finally relief when they arrived at their destination.

[39] Porter, Macdonald and MacDonald, ed., *'My Hand will Write What my Heart Dictates*,' 55-56.

Chapter Two

"When you pass through the waters I will be with you"

On 18 December 1864, Sarah Cook awoke to her third Sunday aboard the *Rachel.* It was the first she had spent out of bed. Like many migrants, Sarah had been struck by terrible seasickness in the first few weeks of her journey. Up for breakfast for the first time in days Sarah was treated to smoked bacon, fry, corned beef and tea before the bell rang at ten o'clock for service. She then gathered with her two children Harry and Lilly in the salon with a further twenty to thirty people. Mr Lee was to give the service from the words 'There is joy in the presence of God over the sinner that repenteth'.[40] Her young son Harry had managed to sit still until Mr Lee began to preach, at which point he started to talk. Sarah decided to go into her cabin to get her son something to play with to keep him occupied during the service. Sarah, now able to listen to the service, was very moved by Mr Lee's words as his mention of loved ones brought about thoughts of those left behind as she and her children made their way to Canterbury, where her husband was awaiting their arrival.

Sarah Cook's experience of Sunday service aboard the *Rachel* raises important questions about the role of religion in the everyday lives of women on board migrant ships. New Zealand historians, however, have largely ignored the role of faith in colonisation and the establishment of colonial culture in New Zealand.[41] These historians, in viewing New Zealand history through the lens of secularisation, have tended to see New Zealand as the first secular British colony.[42] James Belich in *Making People* argues that while religion was an important feature in the foundation of several New Zealand settlements, the number of churchgoers was low in colonial New Zealand compared to back home in Britain.[43] However, throughout the diaries of women who migrated to Canterbury between 1850 and 1885 it is evident that religion did play a significant role in their lives throughout their journey. Religion shaped the structure of the week aboard the ship as Sunday was a

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[40] Cook, *Rachel 1864*, 18 December 1864.

[41] Stenhouse, and Wood, *Christianity, Modernity and Culture*, 24.

[42] Ibid., 2; Stenhouse, "Religion and Society," 330-343.

[43] James Belich, *Making People: A History of New Zealanders From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996), 437-438; Stenhouse, "Religion and Society," 344.

significant day marked by religious services. It is frequently mentioned in the shipboard accounts of women such as Sarah Cook. Religion also helped many women to cope with the taxing and strenuous elements of the voyage, particularly during violent storms. Socially, religion was also used as a means to bring people together with prayer and Bible groups held throughout the voyage. Many groups such as Irish Catholics tended to keep to themselves.[44] But the voyage also provided many immigrants with a chance to experience different beliefs and forms of religious expression that they may not have experienced outside the context of the voyage.

The extant diaries show that Sunday service was an important part of the weekly routine on board migrant ships. Even when women did not write anything for the remainder of the week, Sunday was almost always considered important enough to be worth mentioning. This pattern still held where services were cancelled due to bad weather and violent storms. Sarah Cook writes of one such occasion towards the end of her voyage: 'We have not been able to have any service today. It does not feel like Sunday'.[45] The fact that service was such a significant part of the week for Sarah and many other women highlights just how important religious observance was for these women on the voyage out to Canterbury. In a study of religion and society in Victorian and Edwardian England, Hugh McLeod shows that Sundays were an important day of the week marked by an absence of work, wearing special clothes, eating better food, spending time with family and friends, as well as, religious observance.[46] Historians have shown that similar patterns hold for Scotland and Ireland, for both Protestants and Catholics.[47] These practices were not abandoned when women set foot on migrant ships, but rather adapted to fit shipboard life.

Sunday was always set aside for service, where the weather allowed, and many migrants would take the time to reflect and think about friends and family left behind. Passengers would often put on their best clothing, as they would back home, to mark the occasion. Jemima Roy, for example, recorded that the steerage girls aboard the *Cardigan Castle* got their best dresses out especially for Sunday service when she writes, 'We have got our

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[44] Hastings, *Over the Mountains of the Sea*, 94-96.

[45] Cook, *Rachel 1864*, 12 February 1865.

[46] McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, 103.

[47] Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 140; David Hampton, "Belfast: The Unique City," in *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities 1830-1930,* ed. Hugh McLeod (London: Routledge, 1995), 149-151.

dresses out to look more respectable on Sundays'.[48] Special food would often be served on Sundays, such as Sarah's breakfast of bacon and fry, or Mary Jane Oliver's plum pudding every Sunday aboard the *Wiltshire*.[49] These practices were a significant part of the week for migrants and it broke up the monotony of the rest of their weekly routine.

Sundays were therefore significant for many people, as Matilda Williams observed aboard the *Royal Stuart* in 1861: 'There is scarcely one to be seen without a Bible'.[50] Migrants would engage in a number of forms of religious expression, the most important of which was Sunday service. This was often performed twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. Other forms of collective religious observance such as prayer and Bible groups were also common. Emma Hodder, for example, was actively involved in establishing such a group on the *Hydaspes* in 1869: 'I have spoken to the Minister this morning and he is going to conduct prayers for us every morning also a Bible Class Sunday afternoon - I am quite pleased - it is something to look forward to and also it will break the monotony of the day'.[51] For children, religious expression was equally important and played a significant role in their upbringing. Children in Victorian England aged five until thirteen attended Sunday School regularly as part of their weekly routine.[52] On board migrant ships, Sunday schools were set up maintaining this element of religious observance for children. Single women such as Matilda Williams were often involved in teaching these Sunday school classes with Matilda teaching the infants class for children under five aboard the *Royal Stuart*.[53]

A significant amount of Anglican devotion took place in the private domestic sphere including family prayers and individual devotional reading. Back home in England even the poorest homes would often possess a copy of the Bible and sometimes even a Book of Common Prayer.[54] On board migrant ships religion was something that was both practised

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[48] Roy, *Cardigan Castle 1876*, 22 November 1876.

[49] Mary Jane Oliver, *Wiltshire 1876.* ARC 1993.31 181/93 S, 19 February 1877.

[50] Williams, *Royal Stuart 1861*, 7 July 1861.

[51] Emma Hodder, *Diary of Emma Hodder on Board the Hydaspes, London to Lyttelton.* ANZC Archives Call #275, 16 July 1869.

[52] McLeod, *Religion and Society in England*, 78.

[53] Williams, *Royal Stuart 1861,* 15 July 1861.

[54] Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society*, 37-43.

publicly through the Sunday service, but also privately through individual thought and prayer. It provided many women with comfort when things went wrong and a means of dealing with the difficult and uncomfortable journey. Religion was also thought of as being part of the women's sphere as to be a good woman was to be a good Christian while to be a good man was to be an active citizen.[55] For Mary Ann Bennetts private devotion through her poetry was a means of expressing her thoughts and emotions as she farewelled friends and family for a new life in Canterbury. One of her poems entitled *Religion* describes the comfort religion provided her throughout the voyage:

'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasure while we live
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.
After death its joys will be.
Lasting as eternity;
Be the loving God my friend,
Then my bliss shall never end.[56]

Religion was an important aspect of public life on board migrant ships, but it also played a significant part in individual women's ability to privately cope with the difficulties of shipboard life. The consolation of religion was something experienced by many women undergoing the voyage to Canterbury particularly in times of trouble and distress, as we see for example, in Fanny Horrell's ordeal aboard the *Paiko* in 1878 when the ship caught fire. Faced with the prospect of death Fanny turned to her faith to get her through this disastrous event. She later wrote, 'How all the wrong I had ever done came with dreadful force to my mind! Should I have so soon to meet my God?'[57] In her moment of fear she turned to prayer as a means to calm herself before helping others safely on board lifeboats. Having resigned herself to God's will, Fanny chooses not to get on board a lifeboat herself as she realises there is not enough room for everyone to be saved. Instead she gives thanks to God 'that there were none of my friends on board. If it was God's will

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[55] Malmgreen, *Religion in the Lives of English Women 1760-1930*, 3.

[56] "Religion" by Mary Ann Bennetts, *Adamant 1873*. ARC 1900.18 Folder 18. S.

[57] Fanny Horrell, *Piako*. 129/64. S, 12 November 1878.

that I should die I felt quite resigned'.[58] Despite her apparent readiness to meet her God, Fanny is saved by a passing ship which comes to rescue the *Piako*. Jemima Roy experiences similar feelings following a particularly rough storm aboard the *Cardigan Castle*. She writes about how thankful she is to have survived the storm: 'Oh, how thankful we should be to think that we are under our Heavenly Father's care. If we were left in the hands of those around us our times would be worth nothing'.[59] Prayer was the primary means of communication between man and God.[60] This is evident in the way women give thanks for their safe passage and pray in times of distress. Eliza Nicholls does so when she began to doubt her journey, but remained strong in her faith determined that it was God's will she should be on the journey to Canterbury: 'it is the way marked out by my all wise and loving Father who knows what is best for his poor week erring child'.[61] This level of trust in the will of God demonstrates just how important faith was for many migrant women.

As religion was something that was both practiced publicly and in private, it also had the ability to bring groups of people together through their shared beliefs. For migrants the close quarters of shipboard life offered an opportunity to compare and sample different religious practices, to abandon their faith, or to have their beliefs reinforced when confronted by the difficulties of the voyage.[62] The diversity of people on board migrant ships led to a number of different denominations mixing together in the close quarters of the ship. Religion was something that was able to both bring together different classes but also divide them. Eliza Nicholls, for example, who was travelling in steerage aboard the *Pleiades* records on Christmas day 'They had Holy Communion this morning [in the] saloon but only amongst themselves'.[63] This indicates that there was a level of division in religious practice between steerage and cabin class. However, this division was not widespread as steerage passengers were often admitted into the cuddy for service.

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[58] Ibid., 9.

[59] Roy, *Cardigan Castle 1876*, 8 December 1876.

[60] Mary Heimann, *Catholic Devotion in Victorian England* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1995), 70.

[61] Nicholls, *Ship Board Diary on the Pleiades*, 18 September 1872.

[62] Majory Harper "'Everything is English': Expectations, Experiences and Impacts of English Migrants to New Zealand, 1840-1970," in *Far From Home the English in New Zealand,* ed. Lyndon Fraser and Angela McCarthy (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2012), 55.

[63] Nicholls, *Ship Board Diary on the Pleiades*, 25 December 1872.

Priscilla Torlesse, for example, reported that ‘Service was arranged in the cuddy. The first class passengers using their own cabins with the door open leaving the benches round the table for the steerage folk’.[64] Although the steerage passengers had to sit separately from cabin class, the fact that they are all engaged in the same service indicates that religion had the ability to blur the distinction between classes. This tolerance for different classes extended in some ways towards other denominations. Edith Emery records on Sunday 29 August 1879 that it was too rough for them to have their Church of England service on deck; instead they had to move downstairs after the Catholics had finished with their own service.[65] This demonstrates that there was a level of religious tolerance on board migrant ships as the limited amount of space required migrants to share quarters in order to be able to practice their Sunday service.

The variety of people from different classes and backgrounds inevitably meant that a number of different nationalities and religions would be represented on board migrant ships. The relationship between women of Protestant and Catholic faith is particularly significant as Canterbury’s founders had envisioned an English, or at least Church of England settlement, causing great ambivalence towards the large numbers of migrants from Ireland. Officials feared a large influx of Irish Catholics would create a number of social problems including excessive drunkenness and violence in the new settlement.[66] Despite these concerns it became necessary for immigration agents to attract women from the Catholic southern provinces in order to meet the incessant demand for domestic labour, which was always in short supply.[67] These attitudes towards Irish Catholics are evident in the writing of diarists such as Emma Hodder and Fanny Horrell. Emma travelling aboard the *Hydaspes* writes on 16 July, ‘a disturbance last night with the Irish - we were all very much frightened - watches appointed at night - I and Grace Campbell begin tonight - we are afraid they will rise in the night and do for us’.[68] It is clear that Emma and the rest of her steerage passengers have a distrust for the Irish Catholics travelling amongst them. Fanny travelling on the *Piako* experiences the Irish Catholics in a similar way and it is clear

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[64] Torlesse, *Egmont*, 9 October 1856.

[65] Edith Jane Emery, *Zealandia 1879*. ARC 1988.50 203/88, 29 August 1879.

[66] Lyndon Fraser, *To Tara via Holyhead: Irish Catholic Immigrants in Nineteenth Century Christchurch* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997), 33.

[67] Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn, “The Provincial and Gold-rush years, 1853-70,” 79, accessed April 11, 2018, https://nzhistory.govt.nz/files/documents/peopling3.pdf.

[68] Hodder, *Diary of Emma Hodder*, 16 July 1869.

that she has had limited interaction with Catholics. She writes in her entry for 5 October: 'There are a great many Irish Roman Catholics. They do make a fuss over their prayers, saying "Mary Mother of God pray for us."'[69] It can be discerned that the mixture of religion and nationalities on board, particularly amongst the steerage passengers, led many English girls to interact with girls from vastly different backgrounds and whom they may never have had the chance to interact with outside of the voyage.

Despite the lack of acknowledgement from scholars, religion was in fact a significant part of the everyday lives of women on board migrant ships. It impacted on the structure of their week, forming one of the most important parts of shipboard life through Sunday service. As noted earlier, religion was considered part of the women's sphere so it seems natural that it would heavily impact on their personal ability to cope with the challenges presented by everyday life on board migrant ships. The close quarters of the ship also provided women with the perfect opportunity to share their devotional practices, particularly in steerage where women of different denominations would interact in a capacity not available to them outside of the voyage.

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[69] Horrell, *Piako*, 5 October 1878.

Chapter Three

No Easy Task

17 July 1873 Mary Ann Bennetts awoke to her second day aboard the *Adamant*. Her day began in the same way most days would begin on her three month voyage to Canterbury. Out of bed by seven and with the cabin clean by eight, Mary and her mess mates were given breakfast before being allowed to take some sewing work on deck. At this early stage of the voyage many girls were experiencing seasickness. Many of those who were able to make it onto the deck chose to simply lie down as they were unable to walk across the moving ship. At one o'clock the girls had their tea and were served dinner at five. After dinner no more hot food was served: 'if we wish for supper, we have to eat a biscuit'.[70] Before the lamps were turned out at ten o'clock for bed the girls would amuse themselves by playing games. At ten their evening came to an end as all the steerage girls were required to be in bed by this time and were locked down for the night.

The routine of daily life on board migrant ships regulated when passengers woke up in the morning and went to bed in the evening, when they cooked, ate, and washed their dishes, when they scrubbed the decks, and when their children went to school. The weekly timetable established a routine of certain days for washing clothes and collecting the supplies for each mess, while Sunday was allocated as a day for inspection and worship.[71] The weekly timetable was particularly important for establishing when certain chores were to be carried out such as washing clothes, cleaning out compartments and airing bedding on deck.[72] Daily life was structured differently according to which class a passenger belonged to. For those in steerage, the day began when the mess captains rose at six o'clock to fetch water. Their return signalled that it was time for everyone else to wake up.[73] In cabin class the day was more relaxed. This is demonstrated in the writing of women such as Emma Mary Parkerson: 'A very fine day we were on deck all the morning, and almost the whole afternoon. In the evening we had music'.[74] Emma's attitude to her

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[70] Mary Ann Bennetts, *Adamant* 1873. ARC 1900.18 Folder 18. S, 17 July 1873.

[71] Hastings, *Over the Mountains of the Sea*, 73.

[72] Ibid., 78-80.

[73] Ibid., 74.

[74] Emma Mary Parkerson, *John Taylor 1853.* CP & ES 156, 25 August 1853.

daily activities shows how different daily life for cabin class passengers was compared to the more structured life of women in steerage.

Space, just like routine, was carefully regulated according to Victorian values. Everyone on board knew their place and their role within the confines of class, gender, and the family. This also dictated how space on the ship was structured.[75] The steerage quarters were divided with 'the young men in front, the married people in the middle and the single girls at the end'.[76] Careful attention was paid to separating the single women from the men, while the cabin class passengers were located above. Cabin class passengers also enjoyed the saloon space to themselves while the single women had, in the words of Sarah Elizabeth Stephens, 'the high part of the deck called the poop to ourselves'.[77] This allowed the single women to be able to escape the confines of their quarters at regulated times, but still remain separated from the rest of the passengers. The monotony of the daily routine often became tedious for many women with some resorting to writing in their diaries that they simply 'passed the day as usual'.[78] Despite the monotony, everyday life was often complicated by the environment due to the movement of the ship, the intense heat of the tropics, and the storms of the Roaring Forties. Mary Ann Bennetts writes that when passing through the tropics everyday life was affected by the intense heat as it was 'so hot that we can scare eat or sleep'.[79] Emma Barker also makes comment on the difficulties of everyday life when she writes that on one very rough day she and her children remained on the bed 'for we really could not stand'.[80] The voyage provided many challenges to the structure and monotony of everyday life on board migrant ships, as women had to continually battle with the difficulties of the constantly moving the ship as well as changes in weather.

The division between classes is evident in the way women experienced everyday life on board migrant ships. For those travelling in steerage the voyage was a 'working holiday' while for those who could afford to be in cabin class the voyage was more of a 'holiday

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[75] Hastings, "Women at Sea, 1870-1885," 33.

[76] Oliver, *Wiltshire 1876*, 14 December 1876.

[77] Sarah Elizabeth Stephens, *Cardigan Castle* 1876. ARC 1989.81, 28 September 1877.

[78] Parkerson, *John Taylor 1853*, 8 September 1853.

[79] Bennetts, *Adamant* 1873, 5 August 1873.

[80] Barker, *Charlotte Jane 1850*, 12 November 1850.

cruise'.[81] This is emphasised in shipboard writing with steerage diaries tending to emphasise work, such as the collection of mess supplies. Cabin diaries by contrast, tend to emphasise leisure.[82] While first class passengers may have been able to afford to pay for their washing to be done, be served their meals, and even bring their own servants on the voyage, steerage women, particularly those with young families, were busy attending to their children, cooking, cleaning, and mending worn clothes.[83]

In cabin class a number of different leisure opportunities were available to passengers. Rebecca Dawber, who was travelling in cabin class with her husband and eight children, records throughout her diary the ways in which she passes the time aboard the *Ceres*. On 12 April 1870 she wrote, 'I mended Alfred's clothes this morning, and then commenced to knit a stocking. Have been learning to play draughts too this afternoon'.[84] By 9 May, just a month later, Rebecca had 'Finished Frank a pair of trousers. Finished reading "Waverly" and commenced "Mansfield Park" by Jane Austen', as well as writing a piece of her letter to her father.[85] She combines elements of childcare and leisure into her daily routine. Aided by the help of two daughters aged seventeen and twelve to help care for the younger children, Rebecca would have had more freedom compared with other women to engage in leisure activities such as reading and writing. For Edith Cordery, a mother who was travelling without her husband, leisure started when her children went to bed. She reported in her shipboard account that 'I get the Children to bed about half past seven and then go on the poop for a bit'.[86] This reveals that women's experiences differed not only by class, but also by marital status and whether or not they had children. For Edith, caring for her children came first, while for women such as Emma Barker, a first class passenger who could afford to pay a steerage girl to care for her children, the experience of leisure on the voyage would have been markedly different.

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[81] Hastings, *Over the Mountains of the Sea*, 87.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Barbara Brookes, "Settling Pākehā Families, Unsettling Whānau" in A History of New Zealand Women (New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books, 2016), 59.

[84] Dawber, *Ceres 1870*, 12 April 1870.

[85] Ibid., 9 May 1870.

[86] Edith Alice Cordery, *Waimate* ARC 18990.93 Folder 844 454/90, 15 October 1881.

When women could get time away from their children, or for the single women on board, activities on deck were some of the most popular. Walks on deck were a common way to pass the time and during their time in the tropics those who weren't locked down in steerage would often lounge on deck to escape the heat under cloths set up by the sailors.[87] Concerts were another popular way to pass the time and were undertaken by both steerage and cabin class passengers. Priscilla Torlesse writes in her shipboard diary that cabin passengers aboard the *Egmont* were 'dancing and singing and watching the stars' on deck one evening.[88] Steerage girls aboard the *Adamant* also had a great time singing and dancing through the evening. Mary Ann Bennetts recalled that 'Last evening after tea fourteen girls dressed themselves to dance, and kept on singing and dancing until half past nine'.[89] For these women leisure was largely dependant on their class and martial status. Single cabin class women such as Mary Anne Bishop and fellow cabin passenger Miss Mountford had the freedom to engage in a game of 'Shuffle Katey' against Mr Wortley and Mr Ward aboard the *Charlotte Jane*.[90] Priscilla, who was also a single cabin class woman, had the freedom and the time to both write an extensive diary and to fill it with an array of sketches and watercolour paintings of passing ships and birds seen on the voyage (see Figures 3 and 4). These types of freedoms were not always available to steerage women particularly when passing through the tropics, as their leisure was far more regulated and controlled.

In steerage, everyday life was regulated by their division into messes of seven to eight. One of the first jobs the matron was tasked with was dividing the single women into their mess groups. These groups were used to allocate cleaning chores and formed a unit for the distribution of provisions and the collection and sharing of meals.[91] Single women travelling in steerage were effectively locked away during the voyage with limited freedoms as colonial authorities were determined to prevent any immoral or indecent behaviour. This meant that the single women were confined to their quarters for the majority of the voyage

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[87] Elizabeth Mills, *Crusader, 1882-3*. 2006.86.1 S.

[88] Torlesse, *Egmont*, Saturday 1 November 1856.

[89] Bennetts, *Adamant 1873*, 11 October 1873.

[90] Mary Anne Bishop, *Journal of M. A. Bishop, Emigrant to the Canterbury Settlement, New Zealand in the Charlotte Jane.* ANZC Archives Call #252, 8 November 1850.

[91] Macdonald, *A Women of Good Character*, 85.

Figure 3: Pencil Sketch from the Diary of Priscilla Torlesse

Source: Diary on board *Egmont* to Lyttelton and at Fernside Station, Canterbury. 11 September 1856 - 18 April 1857. Priscilla Torlesse collection Canterbury Museum. CP & ES 48, page 60.

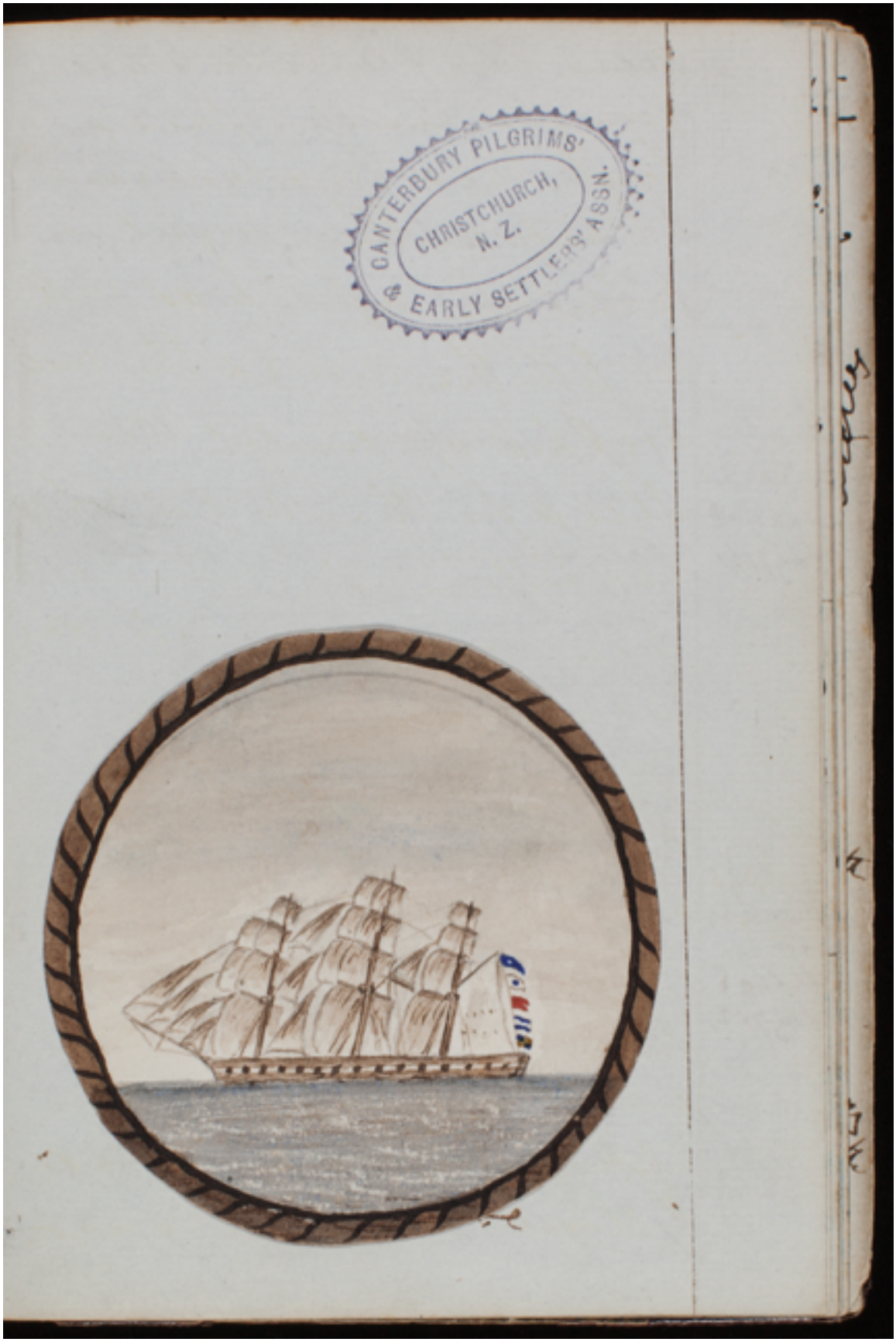

Figure 4: Watercolour Painting from the Diary of Priscilla Torlesse

Source: Diary on board *Egmont* to Lyttelton and at Fernside Station, Canterbury. 11 September 1856 - 18 April 1857. Priscilla Torlesse collection Canterbury Museum. CP & ES 48, page 112.

and no single men, not even the captain or doctor, were permitted to enter without the matron present.[92] The steerage quarters provided women with a chance to establish new friendships as by being confined together for three months many women formed close relationships with their messmates.[93] These friendships helped with the monotony of everyday life as some of the girls aboard the *Cardigan Castle* demonstrated by dressing up to amuse the rest of the girls.[94] However, the close quarters of steerage also led to arguments. Jemima Roy records several on the *Cardigan Castle,* most of which started over trivial matters such as food.[95] Disagreements with the matron also took place and Jemima herself was involved in one such conflict which saw the matron calling her 'a hypocrite' and 'too religious'.[96] As punishment Jemima was forced to stay below deck while the others were allowed out on the poop. Despite being involved in various conflicts, the matron performed an important duty maintaining order in the steerage quarters and providing the young women with activities to pass the time. Often the matron provided the girls with sewing work which provided a practical way for the women to occupy themselves. On board the *Crusader,* Elizabeth Mills describes how 'All the girls got work from the matron, those that's going to the Depot got dresses for themselves others chemise and others stockings'.[97] While life for single women in steerage was far more regulated than for other women, they still managed to find ways to amuse themselves, forming strong friendships that many were sad to leave behind when they finally arrived in Canterbury.

Food was another significant part of everyday life on board migrant ships. Not only did the times at which they ate structure their daily routine, but the types of food available had a significant impact on daily enjoyment. Food was also structured throughout the week with certain foods served on particular days. Mary Jane Oliver, for example, recorded in her diary the food she and the rest of her messmates were served on a weekly basis: 'We get bread everyday and tea twice a day and porridge every second day and pea soup twice a week and rice every second day pork pressed meat and potatoes twice a week and

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[92] Hastings, "Women at Sea, 1870-1885," 36.

[93] Macdonald, *A Women of Good Character*, 73.

[94] Roy, *Cardigan Castle 1876*, 29 November 1876.

[95] Ibid., 30 October 1876.

[96] Ibid., 2 December 1876.

[97] Mills, *Crusader, 1882-3*.

pickles twice a week a pound of sugar each nine ounces of butter each a week pepper salt mustard and trickle[sic] every week and a plum pudding every Sunday'.[98] The variety and quantity of food was a significant part of everyday life on the voyage as Eliza Nicholls complained that those aboard the *Pleiades '*are nearly starved for want of good food'.[99]

Activities such as cooking and baking food could also provide a form of leisure, or at least a means of passing time on the long voyage. This is particularly evident in the experiences of women in steerage, like Mary Ann Bennetts and Eliza Nicholls who both record instances where women got together to bake. Mary recalled that 'some of the girls are making cakes, which reminds us of home'.[100] This indicates that food not only served to bring women together through sharing and preparing a meal but also provided strong connections to their home life. Eliza also used preparing food as a means of spending time with friends on the voyage. She noted in her diary 'me and Hannah spent nearly all morning making a meat pie with the meat and potatoes that we could not eat'.[101] Here Eliza and Hannah utilise their rations to make the best of what food they had. However, unfortunately for them, the cook ruined their pie which meant their hard work was in vain.

There was also a difference between the food provided for steerage passengers and what was on offer for those in cabin class. For passengers such as Sarah Cook and Emma Barker, food was much more adequate than what was provided for women in steerage. On Friday 13 January 1865, Sarah noted that 'Today we had preserved lobster and lamb and green peas, after we had some fritters'.[102] Emma added to this picture of cabin class food writing: 'we have excellent food: meat, bread, potatoes, cheese, pies, puddings etc'.[103] Although the level of food in cabin class was considerably better than that offered in steerage, complaints about food united many cabin class women. Emma and fellow passenger Mary Anne Bishop complained at the quality of the bread aboard the *Charlotte Jane,* with Mary referring to it as 'the worst part of our fare'.[104] She, along with Emma

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[98] Oliver, *Wiltshire 1876*, 19 February 1877.

[99] Nicholls, *Ship Board Diary on the Pleiades*, 19 September 1872.

[100] Bennetts, *Adamant 1873*, 19 July 1873.

[101] Nicholls, *Ship Board Diary on the Pleiades*, 20 September 1872.

[102] Cook, *Rachel 1864*, 13 January 1865.

[103] Barker, *Charlotte Jane*, 8 November 1850.

[104] Bishop, *Journal of M. A. Bishop*, 26 September 1850.

Barker and Mrs Mountfort, offered to make the bread themselves in hopes of improving the taste. Food brought people together on the voyage out to Canterbury through preparing, eating, and also complaining about the quality of food on offer. It was an important aspect of daily life for women across all classes, as food for both cabin and steerage women was significant to their daily routines.

Conclusion

Women embarked on the long and arduous journey to Canterbury for a variety of reasons. Some were simply following their husbands out on their colonial endeavours, while many single women sought a better life for themselves through the high wages offered as a result of the shortage of domestic servants in the colony. Most came from England and Scotland, but large numbers also immigrated from Ireland despite authorities initially wanting to maintain Canterbury as a English settlement. These women left behind family and friends when embarking on this journey to make a new life for themselves and their families in the newly established colony.

The voyage these women embarked on was a lengthy one and it presented them with many challenges. Seasickness made the first few weeks on board unpleasant for many and after recovering from this first phase of the journey they were met with the uncomfortable heat of the tropics, closely followed by the storms of the Roaring Forties. The tropics brought intense heat which was highly uncomfortable for most women, particularly those in steerage. Women tried to combat the heat by wearing as little clothing as possible, but unlike the men they were not permitted to sleep or shower on deck. Once the heat of the tropics was over they were met by a drop in temperature and wild storms as they passed through the Roaring Forties before finally arriving at their long awaited destination.

Religion was a significant part of the voyage for many women diarists. Sunday was an important day of the week for almost everyone on board with services, Bible groups, special food and everyone wearing their best clothes. These shipboard accounts demonstrate how important Christian faith was in their ability to cope with the everyday challenges presented by life at sea. The mention of Sunday service in many shipboard diaries, even when it was cancelled, shows how significant it was to the structure of their weekly routine. The personal thoughts and reflections of many diarists show that their faith was one of the key ways in which they coped with difficult situations which ranged from fires, to rough storms, and even personal doubts as to why they embarked on this journey in the first place. Religion was not only part of the personal private devotion of many women, but also provided a means with which to bring people together from different classes and allowed for these women to interact with people from different religious backgrounds, something which they may not have encountered outside of the voyage.

Despite historians such as James Belich arguing that religion was of little importance to colonists, the writings of these women reveal that it was, in fact, an important part of life for the duration of the voyage.

The everyday routines established on board migrant ships provided women with a daily and weekly structure. It controlled when they ate, and when they slept, did their chores, and took time for leisure. Class played a significant role in determining the structure of the day including when women could engage in leisure activities, such as reading, writing and games on deck. Women in cabin class experienced more freedoms as they did not have to conform to the same rules as those in steerage, for whom the day was tightly structured either by the matron, if single, or their need to care for their own children. Elements such as food were also a significant part in the everyday pleasure of passengers and was a means of bringing people together through shared meals, the preparation of food, and even complaints about the quality of what was on offer.

Overall, an analysis of the shipboard narratives of women who embarked on the voyage to Canterbury illustrates the difficulties they faced on their journey and the challenges posed by everyday life at sea. The writings of these women have proved to be extremely valuable historical sources. They reveal important information about the everyday experiences of female migrants as well as showcasing their voices. This study provides an insight into what the voyage to Canterbury was like for women between 1850 and 1885 and adds to the growing historiography of migration history and, more broadly, New Zealand women’s history.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Table 1: Family Type, Canterbury Assisted Immigrants (percent)

	Families	Single Men	Single Women	All
England	55.7 (+ Welsh)	37.3	45.7	56.5
Scotland	17.6	29.3	13.8	19.9
Wales		1.5	1.2	1.4
Ireland	14.8	31.9	39.3	22.1
n	1014	893	934	5378

Source: Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn, “The Provincial and Gold-rush years, 1853-70,” 70.

As shown in Table 1, of those women who came to Canterbury as assisted migrants between 1853-1870 over half were of English origin with only 19.9 percent from Scotland and 22.1 percent from Ireland. Of those with English origins, 55.7 percent travelled with families and a further 45.7 percent as single women. The Irish also contributed a number of assisted single women to the province (39.3 percent).[105] Table 3 shows that amongst the single women who made the journey to Canterbury 71.2 percent listed their occupation as domestic servant.[106] While this number signifies the importance of domestic servants to the colony it is also important to consider that the term domestic servant was often applied loosely and could refer to individuals who were prepared to work as domestic servants in order to secure passage. Mary Jane Oliver sailing on the *Wiltshire* in 1876, for example, backs up this trend as she records that in steerage there were twenty English, thirty-nine Irish and five Scottish women travelling in the single women's compartment.[107]

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[105] Phillips and Hearn, “The Provincial and Gold-rush years, 1853-70,” 70.

[106] Ibid., 73-74.

[107] Oliver, *Wiltshire 1876*, December 1876.

Appendix 2

Table 2.1: Nationality and Martial Status of Female Migrants to Canterbury Between 1850 and 1885

	England	Scotland	Ireland	Unknown	n
Married	4	0	0	1	5
Single	10	1	3	4	18
Unknown	0	0	0	1	1
n	14	1	3	6	24

Source: Diaries from Canterbury Museum and Christchurch Public Libraries.

Table 2.2: Nationality and Class of Female Migrants to Canterbury Between 1850 and 1885

	England	Scotland	Irish	Unknown	n
Cabin Class	6	0	1	4	11
Steerage	8	1	2	2	13
n	14	1	3	6	24

Source: Diaries from Canterbury Museum and Christchurch Public Libraries.

Appendix 3

Table 3: Occupations of Canterbury's Assisted Single Women Migrants, 1857-1870 (percent)

Occupation	**Total**
General domestic servant	71.2
Outdoor service/farming	8.5
Cooks and housekeepers	6.3
Needlework	1.8
Specialised domestic servant	3.4
Nursing	2.9
Teaching	0.4
Laundry work	0.4
Textile/factory work	0.3
Matrons	0.5
Skilled/handicrafts	4.1
Retail/commerce	0.1
Not Stated	33
n	988

Source: Phillips and Hearn, "The Provincial and Gold-rush years, 1853-70," 73-74.

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